

1954-55: One seen floating in the Katakhal river near Hasiura, Hailakandi district. It was shot with a gun but could not be killed. It was a large specimen, 4-5 m long (A. Mazid Choudhury, pers. comm.).

Early 1960s: One shot by a 'white' hunter in the Dhaleswari river, south of Gharmura in Hailakandi district. After that killing, the place is called Goduldor (Godul= Gharial in local Bengali dialect) and is inside the Innerline Reserve Forest.

1988: During a short field survey in Manipur, I came across reports of stray, or rather, remnant individuals of gharial from the upper reaches of the Barak river and its tributary, the Makru river (Choudhury 1989, 1992). I cross checked with the Forest Department who were also aware of these facts. Unfortunately, no survey could be carried out due to insurgent activities in the area. Cooper (1951a, b) did not cover these stretches of the rivers either.

1996: In January, I visited some sites in the upper reaches of the Barak and its tributaries, the Makru and the Irang in Tamenglong district of Manipur. Although no gharial could be seen, the long deep pools with sand banks showed potential habitat

for the reptile. This time again some of the stretches, farther interior, could not be surveyed due to insurgent activities.

Although the gharial was present in the Barak river system, it was never common in the recent past. The main reasons for its decline in the area are (1) Heavy year-round use of the rivers for fishing and as waterway to transport bamboo and other forest produce; (2) Encroachment of basking and breeding beaches (occupied by humans for setting up of fishing camps, logging camp and bamboo-collection camp); (3) Chasing and attempt to kill any gharial sighted; (4) Siltation of river-beds due to heavy deforestation in the hills; and (5) Use of poison and dynamite for fishing by tribals in the upper reaches of the rivers. While there are possibilities of a few gharials still living in the upper reaches of the Barak and the Dhaleswari rivers, they are unlikely to survive for long.

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22. AN OBSERVATION ON ECDYSIS IN THE COMMON HOUSE LIZARD *HEMIDACTYLUS FLAVIVIRIDIS* RUPELL OF INDIA

During the last part of March 1996, I collected a copulating pair of the common house lizard, from the outside wall of a verandah at Kolasib of Mizoram, India at 0755 hrs. The outside atmospheric temperature was measured and was

found to be 16°C, there was a heavy shower during the preceding night. Kolasib is a hilly terrain at an altitude 1067 m. The lizard pair was caught and kept in a 250 ml borosil glass beaker with a paper lid having some pores for ventilation. The pair was

kept under constant watch to observe the moulting. On 4th April, 1996 at 1000 hrs when I left for college both the lizards were normal and one of them was sitting on the bottom. Around 1230 hrs when I returned from college I saw some loose skin on the head of one lizard, which was sitting on the floor of the jar. From this it is presumed that the loosening of skin may have started an hour before i.e. around 1100 or 1130 hrs. The process of shedding of skin was complete by 1800 hrs. i.e. complete shedding took 6.5 to 7.00 hours. During this period slight movement of the moulting lizard was observed but the lizard did not seem to show any sign of restlessness or uneasiness. After the shedding of its skin, 2/3rd of its moult (except the lower portion of the snout) was eaten by one of the two lizards.

This observation is in contradiction to the earlier observation of Prasad (1916) taken at Panipat

which states that the process of moulting was completed in 52 hours. He also mentioned that the animal was very restless and rubbed against the sides of the glass jar in which it was kept. Such peculiar behaviour could be due to the ectoparasitic infection of reddish 'ticks' or mites which, he mentioned, were on the body of the lizard and did not come off with the cast, but bored through it and remained attached to the animal. Restlessness was not observed in the present investigation as the animal was free from ticks or mites. However it confirms Prasad's (1916), observation that skin is shed in pieces.

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23. OCCURRENCE OF THE FAT TAILED GECKO, *EUBLEPHARIS HARDWICKII* GREY (SAURIA: GEKKONIDAE) WITH REMARKS ON THE VARIATION IN CERTAIN TAXONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

(With one plate)

A fat tailed lizard was captured in Aushgram village of Burdwan District, West Bengal on 6th April, 1995, and kept in the Ecological Park for a few days and then brought to the Zoology Department of Burdwan University, West Bengal, India.

The colour of the head and the body is deep tobacco brown above with one 10 mm broad cream coloured transverse band at the middle of the body and another similar 7.5 mm broad band at the junction of the body and tail. There is a cream coloured "V" shaped narrow band round the neck extending to some extent towards the body proper on one side, and upto the tip of the snout through upper labials on the otherside. The belly is creamy

white. One brown spot is noted on each hind limb. The tail is bluish with deep brown spots; the tip is brown. The head and body measures 100 mm and the tail 45 mm.

BEHAVIOUR

After capture, the animal starved for the first two months. Then gradually it started feeding on soft-bodied insects like dragonfly, moth, butterfly, grasshopper, mosquitoes etc., but never took hard, chitinised insects indicating a selective feeding habit. It ate a few hatchlings of the common house lizard. It is nocturnal but moves in artificial darkness during day time. The lizard moves or walks solely on its